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# **The role of regionally differentiated drink culture in the Hungarian tourism**

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**Pécs  
2008**

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**Earth Sciences Doctoral Program**

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## I. Introduction, objectives

Today tourism is one of the world economy's sectors with the largest sales turnover. It enables the host countries to exploit natural and cultural resources not marketable in other ways, diversifying their economy and obtaining an additional income, which twists further to other fields of economy, too, exerting a general economy intensifying effect (LENGYEL M. 2002).

By today, tourism has become not only one of the most significant sectors of economy but also an individual discipline. For complex researches, primarily geography, economics, statistics, sociology and psychology may be useful (AUBERT A. – TÓTH J. 2006), its realisation is ensured by the regional development and marketing.

Most wine and fruit-producing districts are situated in the surroundings of Hungary's poorer villages, where subsistence is hard and unemployment is high. These economically backward regions consider tourism as a take-off point, which could not only provide jobs for the local people but promote the local selling of the agricultural products, too. Thus, strengthening each other, drink culture and tourism can serve the close-up of backward regions, the regional development, and the vivification of economy. To make this process effective and dynamic, scientific researches should ground and reveal the latent and express market demands.

In my doctoral dissertation, I deal with the tourism of based upon the wine culture of two regions that were offered a great opportunity some years ago, and it may turn out in the near future whether they can take advantage of it. According to the decision of UNESCO in 2002, Tokaj-Hegyalja Wine District became a World Heritage site, and pálinka was recognised as an original-protected Hungarian product by the European Union, so it can be deemed as a real Hungaricum. Both ranks may raise tourism attraction high, making Tokaji wine and Szabolcs pálinka the basis of regional tourism offer.

Tokaj-Hegyalja District is situated in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, along the Bodrog and Tisza Rivers. It can be considered a closed area that is not closely connected to the other areas of the county by either the farming or the tourism. Viniculture and oenology have ensured fame for this district for several centuries and the main source of subsistence, but organised wine tourism dates back only ten years. It is time to take into account the successes and failures, and upon drawing the conclusions we can determine what to change in order to increase efficiency.

In the economic life of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, pálinka has not had a significant role up to present. The most disadvantageous Hungarian county is looking for its new image, tourism attraction. Today the judgement of pálinka is not unambiguously positive, so people are lacking in courage to build the strategy on it. Here the initial steps are missing yet. Throughout the county, the conditions are suitable for fruit-growing, and until the recent past, fresh fruits had determining role in the local economy; however, the loss of market made the farmers' opportunities uncertain. In geographical terms, the fruit-growing area for the raw materials of pálinka cannot be determined so exactly as the district on the Hegyalja. Therefore, the geographical district of establishing pálinka-based tourism is contingent yet, it can be defined more exactly only later on.

In my dissertation, I aim to promote the elaboration of the two regions' tourism strategy based upon drink culture. Firstly, I outline the current status of the Hungarian tourism, highlighting the fields where, taking the changes in international tourism demand trends into consideration, development has a good chance. Following this, I present the conditions and market possibilities of the two sectors, indicating the take-off points that I consider possible.

After the situation analysis of the sectors, I study the international relations of wine tourism, and then I turn to the central topic of my researches: the analysis of the wine tourism on the Hegyalja and the regional establishment of pálinka tourism in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County.

The purpose of my research was to answer the following questions:

- What characterises Hungarian tourism today, and what fields should especially be improved?
- What is the Hungarian oenological sector's market position like, and what could improve the current unfavourable conditions?
- To what extent does the change in the position of the Hungarian pálinka influence the market?
- Where is the place and role of wine tourism, what are the international experiences?
- How does wine tourism operate on Tokaj-Hegyalja, why is it actually not successful, and what changes are necessary?
- How can pálinka tourism be established in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County?
- What perspectives may the relationship between tourism and traditional drink culture have?

I have carried out my researches in two given geographical areas, but the created picture has a model value: it may be adapted to other districts and wine-growing regions, too.

I intended to synthesise the opinion and situation analysis of numerous tourism experts, oenologists and pálinka-making specialists during my research, but my final conclusions are certainly individual. During my work, the most important factor was always consumer judgement; in my opinion, the success of a servicing sector can only be based upon this.

## II. Research, study methods

1. During my research work, I first collected and systemised the available information and data. The data on international tourism were collected from the data files of Statistisches Jahrbuch and WTO, while the domestic statistical data were obtained from the official publications of the Central Statistical Office (KSH), the National Council of Hill Communities (HNT) and Magyar Turizmus Zrt. (Hungarian Tourism Company Limited by Shares). Besides, to present the situation of the international and domestic tourism, I conducted a bibliographical research from studies by relevant authors. Besides the comprehensive studies, numerous conference publications have been issued, making the study and analysis of a certain subarea possible.

During the fact finding of the oenological sector, I had the opportunity to exploit my own studies, since I have published over 200 studies, articles on this issue in the past 15 years. Owing to the recent radical change of the market conditions, the presentation of the pálinka's current situation cannot be assessed with scientific preciseness yet, so I could apply historical and planning studies in this field. As for the situation assessment, I consider the data supplied by Magyar Szeszipari Szövetség és Terméktanács (MSzSzT, Hungarian Association and Product Council for Distilling Industry) and Agrármarketing Centrum (AMC, Agrarmarketing Centre).

Besides processing the statistical data and the specialised literature, the critical presentation of the legislative background is also of special importance owing to the nature of the topic. Hungarian oenology is subject to the Wine Law, the Law on Hill Communities and the Excise Law, but the current directives and planned changes of the European Union are

also determinant. The Italian act on wine tourism is a curiosity and closely related to my topic, so its description and analysis is essential.

The legal status of pálinka is specified by the Codex Alimentarius Hungaricus that became effective in 2002 and then its supplementing ministerial decree. The economic requirements of distribution are set forth in the Excise Act. The origin-protection aspects of pálinka are regulated by a former decree of the European Union, which was actualised upon Hungary's accession.

I have considered and used the National Tourism Development Strategy and the related regional strategical plans, since these documents form the basics of domestic tourism. I utilised a lot of useful information in my dissertation from application materials related to this topic, each of them including a broad situation analysis.

2. After processing the secondary sources, I have carried out personal interviews with on-site work. During this, first I contacted the representatives of the official and interest protection organisations, including the current and former General Secretary of HNT, FVM Specialist in charge of geographical designation protection, the resigning President of the Hungarian Wine Academy and the President of MSzSzT.

Following this, I listened to the opinion of the competent representative of the Community marketing, the Head of Department of AMC, the leader of the Szatmár-Bereg Plum Trail and the President of the association of Hungarian Wine Trails. Then I conducted a personal interview with the regional actors of the two sectors, including the leaders of the wine trails registered on Tokaj-Hegyalja and some wine-growers, as well as the owners or experts of the Szabolcs pálinka distilleries described in my dissertation by name and considered significant by me.

I also contacted the representatives of the tourism industry and asked the specialists of some income tourism agencies dealing with the organisation of domestic wine tourism programs. Finally, taking advantage of my personal relations, I also had conversations with other specialists, including the General Director of Tokaji Kereskedőház Zrt., the proprietor of the Pálinka House in Budapest, the Director of the House of Hungarian Wines, the Head of the Tourinform Office of Tokaj and the former proprietor of Várda-Drink.

During the interviews, I compiled the topic scheme in accordance with the respondent's special area. On the conversations, I made notes and then processed the comments on the basis of them. If it was possible, I also obtained background materials and applied them later on.

It was difficult to eliminate the personal conflicts arising from the dividedness of the sectors and the personal conflicts, specific motives of the actors. The potential offences, personal motivations crossing each other certainly may not play a role in a doctoral dissertation; still, they sometimes have great significance in the formation of the structure, a the evolution of complex pool systems. Both sectors studied by me can be characterised by this status, in both cases too many interest protection organisations operate, and their activity often does not serve the interest of the sector.

Focusing on the tourism services in relation to the drink culture, I considered it important to personally view all possible objects that today function in oenology and, in the case of pálinka, may mean the evolving tourism attraction.

3. Based upon the obtained data and information, I processed the material in a complex manner, monitoring the entire route of the product paths and paying special attention to the segmentation of the potential consumers. In my essay, I aimed to establish the interdisciplinarity between the geographical, tourism, economic and marketing terms. Focusing on the changes in consumer demands, their historical preliminaries and developmental possibilities, this new type of approach considers their satisfaction as its primary purpose, and for this purpose it studies the sectoral issues together with the regional developmental possibilities of the given territory. In this way, instead of the peripheral attitude, regional development embedded into total social interests is deemed as the basis.

To analyse the situation of the two beverage sectors, I performed a SWOT analysis. Based upon this, I highlight the key factors that fundamentally determine the future role of Hungarian oenology and pálinka production. I separately investigate the determining role of the market in both cases. Within its framework, I present the segmentation of the two markets, taking into consideration the domestic experiences and the international market trends.

Following this, I studied the status of wine tourism on Tokaj-Hegyalja. During the analysis, besides the tourism statistics, I apply the interview talks and my personal experiences. When forming my opinion, I examine the possibility for development.

Finally, I researched into the necessity of the evolution of a possible market attraction that is not in existence yet. My model-like study is directed at a geographical region, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. This complex study is based upon the interdependence and interstrengthening effect of three areas, the regional development, the tourism and the pálinka-making forming an organic part of the drink culture ???. Still, success needs a fourth sector, too, and this is Community marketing.



### III. Summary of results

1. Hungary is a significant tourism receiving country, though our proportionate share decreases year by year. The greatest problem of Hungarian tourism is that although a lot of foreigners enter the country border, only a small proportionate of them is a tourist, and the period of their stay is rather short, an average of 3 days. The money spent by tourists in Hungary is also rather inconsiderable. Consequently, the main characteristic feature of our tourism is the relatively low guest turnover and the extremely modest yield.

Taking into consideration the changes in demand trends, an important element of expected growth may be the extension of active tourism supply. These fields can be developed in parallel with each other, since the target groups are basically different and do not influence each other. The spread of active tourism can also mean a solution to the difficulties of seasonality, since it does not concentrate strongly on the summer months and thus the utilisation degree of the available accommodation capacity may be more effective.

- **Health tourism** is the most promising sector of the Hungarian tourism, whose further improvement can make it one of the propulsive sectors of not only tourism but the entire Hungarian economy. The number of the thermal water bases and medicinal wells show that the key sector of the health tourism is tourism building upon medicinal waters already today.

For the purpose of professional and high-quality supply, medicinal hotels and medicinal centres are established in areas with favourable endowments. Consequently, patients can not only enjoy the effect of natural therapies but may be provided medical treatments, too. In medical terms, prevention, rehabilitation and curing all can be determined as purposes.

According to KSH data, in 2006 five of the ten towns most frequently visited by foreign guests are considered the citadel of medicinal tourism (Hévíz, Hajdúszoboszló, Bük, Zalakaros and Harkány), that is, tourism based upon medicinal waters plays a determinant role in the Hungarian supply even today.

In the past decade, bath culture has undergone a radical change in Hungary. The traditional beaches have become less popular and have been replaced by adventure baths throughout the country, which offer wide-ranging entertainment facilities according to the modern demands. In several places, these baths have been built together with the traditional

medicinal baths, offering excellent facilities for the recreation of families consisting of several generations.

Another field of health tourism is the consumption of medical services. Today primarily the medicinal treatments not supported by social are in demand, so foreign guests come to Hungary for dental, rheumatologic, and more recently for plastic surgical services.

Young people are interested in the new form of health tourism, wellness tourism. The primary purpose of wellness tourism is not recovery but prevention. It has been developed in order to counterbalance the disease awareness characterising the welfare societies of the developed countries. The term primarily means a lifestyle, was of thinking, aiming to ensure the optimal condition of the body and the spirit. It can be characterised by conscious health preservation, regular physical exercise, healthy nutrition, the avoidance of unhealthy food and activities, and environmental-friendly attitude.

The expectations can be fulfilled by caterers who provide as many sports facilities as possible and compile the gastronomical offer according to the aspects of healthy nutrition. Besides the standard and price of the services, the customer's decision can be influenced by the country image, too, so the indirect method of state intervention.

- **Rural tourism, together with agrotourism**, may offer ideal and cheap recreation to town families. Primarily families with several children are interested in it; caterers usually ensure places of accommodation in their own houses for the guests. Besides recreation, the guests can get acquainted with the interesting aspects of nature-close traditional rural life, the rural lifestyle, the works of animal husbandry, occasionally the notable events of rural life (pig-killing, wedding celebration, wake, vintage), and they can purchase home-made foods and articles for personal use. Small children might especially enjoy such a holiday.

In our globalising world, quality assurance plays an increasing role, favouring mass products and services, and aiming to make the distribution of products prepared with traditional, domestic methods unviable. Rural tourism offers a small take-off point right for those wishing to escape from overcrowded and busy towns, finding the new lifestyle of multinational companies unacceptable and preferring family-like, hospitable rural holidays and traditional products.

Perspectively, the consumer trends show that agrotourism, related to rural tourism, might have a great future in Hungary. Accordingly, guests are received in a rural environment, in an operating food industrial small plant, where the entrepreneurial activity and products also applied to supply the guests mean the attractive force (SZABÓ G. 2003).

Rural tourism and agrotourism supplement each other: rural tourism primarily entails family-like accommodation and establishes the infrastructure. The content, as well as the attractive force and the guests' motivation are ensured by the agrotourism.

Agrotourism can cover an especially broad scale of plant cultivation, animal husbandry and processing, meaning a unique experience to a town family. Children are mostly interested in animals, while parents may prefer traditional food-making and drink culture, but actually the joint family pastime, the common experiences can make the holiday morally valuable.

In supply terms, agrotourism can entail a supplementary activity for rural farmers dealing with agriculture and their family members. Besides, it provides an opportunity for the local sale of the products. Primarily the regions stricken by industrial decline and the regions feeling the pressure to structurally transfer the agriculture hope to substitute the development of rural tourism for the loss of their profit-making capacity. They suppose their only possibility lies in attracting incomes produced elsewhere into their region, which promotes the incitement of the economy, the improvement of life conditions and thus the keeping of the population (LENGYEL M. 2002). In the initial stage, rural tourism is viable only as a supplementary activity; it is unable to maintain a farming family. Nevertheless, in a later developmental stage, it may even increase a country's internal export by selling the products prepared locally, with traditional methods (Dávid L. 2007).

To extend the supply, today more and more local programs where gastronomy plays a role are organised for the guests. These events generally ensure the primary attraction. In this way, the culinary values of the region can be utilised as a tourism product, too (HANUSZ Á. 2001). Grape harvest festivals, dinner on pig-killing days, fish-soup making competitions are arranged in this way. It may bring a profit to regions that had no attractive force earlier but invented new ideas with creative specialists: wine quiz in Etyek, plum-cooking in Szatmár, raspberry festival in Kismaros, etc.

All this can be strengthened with the local traditions, folklore, too. Thus, the individual image of a given region and at the same time the local people's identity can be enhanced by the exploitation of folk crafts, peasant arts as a tourism attraction and commercial product (MARTONNÉ 1998).

Agrotourism can be enforced if the husbandry of animals and cultivation of plants indigenous in Hungary can profitably be realised with the assistance of researchers. This may have a double profit: on the one hand, it enriches the regional supply, and on the other hand, it establishes a gene bank of inestimable value for the science. In 2004 an act was born stating

the protected, indigenous or endangered, bred Hungarian animal species representing a high genetic value shall be considered a national treasure (AUBER A. 2006).

In the past 10 years, the most successful area of agrotourism has undoubtedly been wine tourism in Hungary, which has operated with more or less organisedness in each district. Nevertheless, its market proportionate share, and developmental phase is generally moderate, after the initial successes uncertainty can be observed. This study discusses the reasons for this process and the possibilities for unravelling with the example of the Tokaj district in detail.

- **Congress tourism (micetourism)** is a developing sector throughout the world; a huge competition has evolved in this market. Congresses are primarily organised for businesspeople, who, usually representing their employer, are demanding and are used to high-standard catering. The financier is generally not the participant but the organiser, and thus the participants, not bearing any costs, are ready to spend more. Focusing on the guests' pleasant stay, the organiser ensures luxury conditions.

According to a ranking by the Association for International Conferences, in Budapest 86 international events were held in 2006, and thus our capital city stood in the 6<sup>th</sup> place among the cities of the world. This result can be thanked to the fact that the number of conferences increased by 26.8% in 2006 as compared with the previous year.

- **Riding tourism** is based upon the fact that Hungary is world-widely famous for its riding traditions. This is due to the memories related to military historical and pastoral life, as well as to the breeding culture. In this trade, the Hungarian stud farms where the most valuable horses originate from are still world-famous: Bábolna, Mezőhegyes, Szilvásvár.

The natural endowments are also ideal to organise riding tourism. Foreign guests are primarily interested in tour riding and prefer the riding-schools located in Western Hungary and near Budapest. Owing to the wrong demand survey, numerous riding-schools in Eastern Hungary could not profitably join the riding tourism.

2. Today oenology is the sector engaging the highest number of employees in the Hungarian agriculture, ensuring direct subsistence for nearly 250 thousand people. The most part of the vine-lands are situated in regions having no other considerable business activity; in these districts viticulture and oenology is the only activity ensuring work and subsistence.

There are hard times for Hungarian oenology today. Having been successful and profitable in the recent past, this sector has gotten into a difficult position; Hungarian wine as

such is presently underpositioned and uneconomical in both the domestic and the foreign markets. Therefore, the realistic purpose is primarily not the quantitative increase but to improve the cost-effectiveness of wine distribution, which could primarily be achieved with purposeful marketing work.

### ***SWOT analysis on the status of the wine sector***

#### **Strengths**

Excellent ecological endowments  
The world-famous Tokaji wine  
Expertise, exactingness of producers  
Stabile domestic consumer market  
Traditional production culture  
Wine consumption culture

#### **Weaknesses**

Frittered estates  
Wine fraud  
The lack of effective marketing work  
Obsolete producer's attitude  
Lack of capital  
Weak interest-enforcing ability  
Lack of propulsive brands  
Underpositioned products  
Lack of governmental intervention  
Defencelessness in trade  
Strong dividedness of the sector

#### **Opportunities**

Effective Community marketing work  
More powerful lobbying  
Increase in domestic quality consumption  
Development of wine tourism  
Excellent Hungarian grape varieties  
National establishment of origin-protection  
Establishment of control in mediating channels  
More effective contribution of Hill Communities

#### **Threats**

Increase in wine import  
Mass cutting down of plantations  
The efficiency of the beer lobby  
Loss of prestige because of fraud  
Disputes about Tokaj wines  
Squabbling of professional organisations  
Unfavourable European Union reform

To improve the position of the sector, I consider the following as the most important tasks to be realised: the regulation of origin protection, the arrangement of integration and the increasing of the efficiency of professional interest enforcement. As a take-off point, I

primarily deem the changing of the sale structure as necessary, by considerably increasing the proportionate share of local sale. Wine tourism offers an opportunity for this.

After their upvaluation for this sector, domestic consumers come more and more into the front, so that the distributors can learn their purchasing and consumption habits. According to my researches, three large consumer segments can be distinguished, whom I named quaffers, occasional consumers and gourmets.

**Table 1**  
**Characteristic features of domestic wine consumers**

	<b>QUAFFERS</b>	<b>OCCASIONAL CUSTOMERS</b>	<b>GOURMETS</b>
<i>Features</i>	<b>consumes most</b>	<b>large, but small consumption</b>	<b>small, but large consumption</b>
<i>Demography</i>	<b>old, men, low education</b>	<b>heterogeneous</b>	<b>middle-aged, high education</b>
<i>Property status</i>	<b>low purchasing power</b>	<b>mixed</b>	<b>well-off</b>
<i>Venue of purchase</i>	<b>pub, market, producer</b>	<b>super-, hypermarket</b>	<b>special store, producer, gastro</b>
<i>Customer aspect</i>	<b>low price</b>	<b>price-quality ratio</b>	<b>quality, origin</b>
<i>Home stock</i>	<b>none</b>	<b>permanent low stock</b>	<b>permanent collection</b>
<i>Proportionate share</i>	<b>large but decreasing</b>	<b>the largest</b>	<b>small but increasing</b>
<i>Other</i>	<b>hidden</b>	<b>family shopping</b>	<b>philosophy, information demand</b>

Source: own research

3. In its current form, wine tourism primarily evolved in Western European countries having a developed wine culture one or two decades ago. Wine tourism can be considered a sector of agrotourism, where the agricultural basic material is the grape-vine, the food industrial plant is represented by the wine cellar, the product is the wine stored there, and the product show is realised in the form of an ambient wine-tasting.

At regional level, wine trails are continuously organised for the purpose of wine tourism in Hungary. Firstly, Villány-Siklós Wine Trail was established in 1994. Despite the world-fame of the Tokaji wine, the region was undoubtedly seen as a crisis zone from economic aspect after the transformation of regime in 1989/1990, life standard was low and the rate of unemployment was high. In 1997 the Association for Tokaj–Hegyalja Wine Trail was formed, aiming to establish the Tokaji wine tourism. The founders expected an alternative profit-earning opportunity from the wine tourism for the local people.

Besides the international recognition of Tokaji aszú, the World Heritage title awarded in 2002 is also a serious attractive force. However, the district is too heterogeneous, divided both in its oenological and tourism supply, showing thus a significant disharmony of supply

(SZABÓ G. 2003). The visitor turnover of the region is low; the low number of private places of accommodation is especially striking.

**Table 2**  
**Visitor turnover of larger villages and towns in Tokaj-Hegyalja District 2006**

	number of visitors	number of visitors	number of guest nights	number of guest nights
	Commercial places of accommodation	Private places of accommodation	Commercial places of accommodation	Private places of accommodation
<i>Erdőbénye</i>	2,619	244	5 178	821
<i>Sárospatak</i>	15,094	1,038	31,714	4,389
<i>Sátoraljaújhely</i>	9,691	229	29 961	863
<i>Szerencs</i>	1,664	-	2 911	-
<i>Tarcal</i>	3,155	325	4 664	398
<i>Tokaj</i>	9,958	813	16,175	1,327

Source: Central Statistical Office (KSH), 2007

I suppose the reasons for relative failure are the following:

- **The marginal role of wine trails**      Presently four wine trail associations are registered in the region, on other Hungarian regions have so many wine trails, which theoretically compete with each other. However, only one of the four wine trails can actually be considered an association dealing with wine tourism, the other three operate rather as a friends' club, a cultural mission. Still, the work of the operating wine trail is incidental; their activity could hardly be perceived for some years after the starting enthusiasm.

It had personal reasons, too, but in my opinion in the current organisational form no wine trail is able to fulfil their task. Having no official power, members have no liabilities, make no sacrifice, and fail to comply with the requirements, expectations. The services were once qualified with the involvement of experts, but it entails no obligations to the members either, and the continuous maintenance of the standard is not controlled.

Regarded as a non-profit organisation, the association can obtain funds with more and more difficulty, and even a considerable self-contribution is required, for which the association has no coverage. Apart from the potential application funds, they can only count on the membership fees, which is only a symbolic amount. Therefore, they practically have nothing, neither employees nor infrastructure. This latter can be solved if the president as a municipal leader or the manager of a business company offers the free infrastructure use.

- **The passivity of the tourism profession** Tokaj-Hegyalja wine tourism was undertaken by none of the travel agencies or travel organisers. The regional travel agency deals with wine tourism only peripherally. The relationship of wine trail associations and the tourism profession is generally only incidental, occasional. The President of the Association for Hungarian Wine Trails is a tourism specialist; still, there is no alive, regular partnership between the wine trails and the travel agencies. If an agency wishes to organise an oenological trail, it directly contacts the service provider and does not need the mediation of the Association; otherwise, it cannot turn to anyone as wine trails have no permanent employees or at least contact persons.
- **Supply insufficiencies** At the Tourinform Office of Tokaj, the inquirers are lucky because the Head of Office speaks foreign languages and the program offer is ample. However, if someone is looking for a place suitable for a wine-tasting program for a group of fifty persons, needs program guiding in German or English, and what is more, he would not like to seat the guests in a cold, humid cellar, there are not too many possibilities. There are only few places where these wishes could be fulfilled.

In numerous small cellars, catering is not ensured, and in some places even basic hygienic insufficiencies occur. Very often the standard of the program is inappropriate, too, with no consciousness. In several places, the tasted wines do not mesh with the wines offered for sale, although customers rightly wish to purchase the tasted wine they liked. Sometimes neglect and dirt is interpreted as adherence to traditions.

- **Poor gastronomic supply** A recurring question of demanding foreign guests on Tokaj-Hegyalja is what local food specialities caterers recommend to the dessert wines. The creative wine-growers find out something, but actually food offer is currently very poor in the region. The foreigners, especially the French, hardly understand it, since there each district has a rich gastronomic offer in accordance with the local wines. Similarly to the above-listed problems, it is not a financial question; if there is no traditional local food supply, it must be created with the assistance of gastronomic specialists, but the current situation may scare the demanding tourists away.

To solve the existing problems, I consider the following changes necessary:

- **Making a wine trail act** In Italy, regulating the wine tourism in a separate act proved to be good, wine tourism operates excellently. It would be worth following



this example, as a considerable part of the listed problems is due to the deregulation. No quality assurance can be implemented without this. The service providers' rights and obligations are not clarified either, the qualification system is only symbolic without official control, and the legislative background of local sale should be guaranteed, too.

This proposal is not necessarily popular; a lot of service providers would probably deem it as the limitation of their rights and possibilities, and not even without good reason. In recent years, the oenological society has got used to that decisions regarding their status are passed without asking their opinion, and the acts entering into force are contradictory, unenforceable. It was true for the Excise Act, which had to be modified nearly monthly. Furthermore, the act, passed for the interest of the sector, caused senseless extra burdens to the wine-growers. The regulation of the marketing contribution dragged on for three years, the text of the act had to be amended several times, the enforcement directives were several months late and were also wrong.

Consequently, the enacting of a new act can only be suggested if the profession uniformly feels such act is for their own interests. The Italian example should not necessarily be followed, but passing a decree or regulation at least at a lower level is essential.

- **The integration of wine trails into hill communities** The operation of wine trails as non-profit organisation cannot be realised. This can only be ensured by an organisation that has the financial basics, the infrastructure, and, even if only in a limited way, has official power and covers the entire sector. There is only one organisation like this: the hill community. Extending its scope of duties requires act modification, which can be solved. Exercising their official competence, hill communities could perform active work especially in the establishment and control of qualifications. In this way, they would at the same time fulfil the interest protection of the district, since it is all wine-growers' interest that the good reputation of the district is not endangered by any service provider by breaching the requirements.

Hill communities function as a public corporation, and thus they have a better chance for successful tendering. They have responsible employees and infrastructure, which enables them to assume the additional burdens related to the wine tourism. Certainly, it does not mean that the currently overloaded hill communities are in their present condition able to do this, development is indispensable. However, this structure makes significantly more efficient work possible than the present one.

- **Activation of the tourism profession** No successful wine tourism can be realised if tourism is avoided. At present, no tourism specialist apart from the Head of Tourinform deals with wine tourism in the district. It is not necessarily a structural but rather an approach question. Larger enterprises wishing to receive several thousand tourists a year should engage a tourism specialist. It must be remembered that tourism is an individual sector that requires well-prepared specialists speaking foreign languages for the successful work.

Besides, the relationship to the tourism profession should be reconsidered, too! Travel agencies should present the program supply, and offer proper interest. The organisational frames should be established on the basis of the mutual interests.

- **Updating of the supply** The traditional wine-tasting may be interesting to the elderly, but it not necessarily raises the young's interest. Their needs are different; a wine-grower's lecture with the wine-tasting is not enjoyable enough but maybe a little boring. We should find such modern forms that fulfil their demands, too. For this purpose, audiovisual shows, interactive exhibitions should be prepared. In the historical environment, the secrets of aszú-making can be presented with waxworks in the semi-darkness of the cellars. Modern supply requires considerable differentiatedness, the wine trail association should build an information base about this.
- **Uniform presentment, brand building** Presently no symbol or logo representing the district or the Tokaji wine specialities exists. The only exception is the initiative of the less considerable Rákóczi Historical Wine Trail. For the information of both the tourists and the consumers, its establishment would be timely. In graphical terms, the solution is not simple, since the historical past, the quality of international fame, the typical Göncz barrel or Tokaji bottle, and perhaps even the World Heritage should be crammed into the new logo. Obviously, this is impossible in this form, but it should be achieved that these associations would come to our mind when looking at the logo. It could decorate the label of Tokaji wines, and this symbol could also indicate the entry of cellars.
- **Improvement of the information service** Today individual tourists can obtain information only from the Tourism Offices located in larger towns and villages. Generally, they are open only in normal business hours on weekdays, so information supply is insufficient. Changes should be made, and financial sources should be found so that personal help could be provided to tourists in the evenings

and at weekends. Furthermore, the wine trails could arrange a duty system in each village and town so that guests may find an open cellar for wine-tasting any time.

4. The semantic content of the word pálinka, and its market position changed upon the publication of the new Codex Alimentarius Hungaricus coming into force on 1 July 2002. According to the requirements, pálinka or fruit distillate is an alcoholic drink that is exclusively gained by the alcoholic fermentation and distillation of the fruit or fruit must. From this moment on, pálinka can be considered a premium product. Upon our accession to the European Union, the organisation declared the protection of the pálinka, and so pálinka is simultaneously a Hungaricum, too.

### ***SWOT analysis on the status of the pálinka***

#### **Strengths**

Ample raw material of excellent quality  
European Union protection  
Producers' expertise  
Demanding design, ample choice  
Traditional production culture  
Improving quality  
Excellent international competition results

#### **Opportunities**

Communicational offensive  
More and more severe legislation, control  
Integration of fruit-growers  
Gastronomical half-pace  
Market enforcement of Hungarica  
Strengthening of the tourism role

#### **Weaknesses**

High taxes  
Black market, fraud  
Lack of effective marketing work  
Low market share, lack of export  
Ambiguous communication  
Weak interest-enforcing ability  
Strong competitive environment  
Unfavourable customer attitude

#### **Threats**

Internal conflicts, misleading products  
Increasing beverage import  
Narrowing domestic market  
Unfavourable changes in taxation

For the purpose of increasing the market share of pálinka, I consider it necessary to strengthen the image is necessary for changing the customer attitude, radically force back the grey and black market, establish the common interest with the fruit-growers, adjust the role played in gastronomy, and the larger intervention of the Community marketing is also essential.

Similarly to the market success of any other product, that of the pálinka is also determined by the consumer behaviour. Therefore, the strategy can only be based upon a circumspect market research that develops a large-scale information base on the customer decision. Since no such exists yet, I set up a hypothesis concerning the expectable consumer behaviour with secondary data, based upon an empirical background. According to KOTLER (1999), it can be mapped as follows by using the “7 O” MODEL.

**Table 3**  
**Characteristics of pálinka consumer market segments**

<i>Customers</i>	<b>THE WELL-OFF DEMANDING</b>	<b>AJÁNDÉKOZÓK</b>	<b>FOREIGN TOURISTS</b>
<i>Products</i>	<b>excellent quality</b>	<b>optimal price-value ratio</b>	<b>Hungaricum</b>
<i>Targets</i>	<b>own consumption</b>	<b>causing joy to others</b>	<b>Souvenir or gift</b>
<i>Influencers</i>	<b>own experience</b>	<b>salesperson</b>	<b>salespersons, tourist guide</b>
<i>Operations</i>	<b>own decision</b>	<b>foreign influence</b>	<b>strong foreign influence</b>
<i>Occasions</i>	<b>Continuous</b>	<b>on occasions</b>	<b>on tourist trips, brief time</b>
<i>Shops</i>	<b>usual store</b>	<b>occasional</b>	<b>tourism destination</b>

Source: Own research

5. We cannot speak about organised pálinka tourism at the moment; only isolated initiatives occur. Nevertheless, the establishment of pálinka has a reality, especially on the regions where traditional drink culture is related to the pálinka.

In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, tourism is regarded as the propulsive sector to close up the region. The strategic program on the development of the region mentions the development of competitive tourism products and systems as a priority. Negative attitudes should be eliminated and an individual image should be created. For this purpose, the attraction should be strengthened by relying upon the existing tourism attractions and establishing a new, wide-ranging tourism offer. The necessary developments could be built upon the natural endowments and the cultural assets.

Pálinka tourism can be shaped based upon the experiences of wine tourism. Since domestic wine tourism has provided both positive and negative examples in the past decade, we should consider and profit from them, and must not make the same mistakes again.

Since the strategical development plan of the county devotes a key role to tourism, we should rely on the traditional drink culture and gastronomy when establishing the attraction. In this way pálinka may have a key role. For this purpose, I recommend the establishment of Szatmár-Bereg Pálinka Trail as the first step. Having a lot of pálinka distilleries manufacturing high-quality, country-fame beverages, the county ensures the conditions for

establishing the pálinka trail. Besides the inventory of the county attraction, I also present these plants and outline the basics of a possible strategy in my essay.

Pálinka tourism can be grounded with the following important steps:

- **Promoting the change of image** Five years ago, pálinka received geographical origin protection, which radically changed its market position, made it a premium product, a recognised Hungaricum. The European Union grants five Hungarian pálinkas the geographical good protection, of which Szabolcsi apple pálinka and Szatmári plum pálinka are in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. A third county drink, Újfehértói racemose sour cherry pálinka will soon receive this honourable title, too. Consequently, the acceptance of the pálinka will be determined by the period during which the general public accepts the change of image.

Thus, pálinka, as a speciality of local gastronomy, may have a key role in the change of image. However, the process cannot be hurried, since the positive attitude to pálinka is unambiguous yet. The positive image of the recognised pálinka and the hospitable county can strengthen each other in the long run.

- **Establishment of pálinka trail** In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, the existing pálinka distilleries may develop the Szatmár-Bereg Pálinka Trail in order to achieve their strategic aims. Plant visits and pálinka-tasting programs can be organised according to the expectations of cultured drink consumption. In my dissertation, I outlined a sale-inciting possibility that encourages tourists to visit Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county several times.
- **Organising complex program packages** The county can primarily expect the domestic tourists; the greatest obstacle is caused by poverty, the lack of infrastructure and long geographical distances. The latter problem was reduced upon the opening of the motorway in 2007.

A tourism program itself is not attracting enough to raise interest despite the long distances. Therefore, pálinka tourism can only be viable if it is one but not the only element of the county offer. We should find the cultural and natural specialities that may also be included in the tourism package. Since the county is rich in natural sights and built cultural heritage, it can be solved with good program organising work. The county borders on three countries; an Upper-Hungary, a Subcarpathian or a Transylvanian trip can also colour the program. Besides, the catering capacity should be extended, too. Apart from Nyíregyháza, only few facilities suitable for receiving demanding guests are available in the county today, and the number of host families is also low.

- **Integrating the rural, agro- and pálinka tourism** Many people can sell the products grown on the plough-lands, orchards and gardens with difficulty, though these vegetables represent a special value to the guests coming from towns.

Fruits, the main regional products, can be an especially colourful attraction. The success of plum jam cooking competitions proves this plan to be feasible. Besides, the local people would not even think that many curiosities, specialities enriching their everyday mean an exciting adventure to the town people. The peculiar avifauna, in summer the storks and in winter the crows flying in large flocks, or the manually driven ferries crossing the rivers all belong to this category. Tourism can be improved successfully only if the advantages of rural, agro- and pálinka tourism are unified in the light of these aspects, too.

#### IV. Further directions of the research

During my researches, I had to separate the issue of Hegyalja wine tourism and the topic of Szabolcs pálinka tourism.

Several researches are being conducted to elaborate the Hungarian sectoral wine strategy and study the consumer preferences of Tokaji wines. As soon as these researches can be utilised, they can be used as a secondary source to carry out the following researches:

- Taking an exact inventory of the tourism attraction on the Tokaj-Hegyalja District.
- A comparative study on the wine tourism of several districts. It would be worth involving the most successful Villányi District, a region near the Lake Balaton and the Tokaj-Hegyalja District into this research. The catering capacity, the program organising, the effectiveness of the information systems and the actual guest turnover can be studied. If a foreign partner can be found, the range of the research can be extended to other countries, too.
- Focus group and questionnaire study on the consumer satisfaction of tourists visiting the Hegyalja wine cellars, and then the segmentation of the market based upon statistical data.
- Proposal on the integration of the isolated wine trails in the light of the study results.

- Theoretical establishment of the functioning management of the integrated wine trail, and elaboration of its strategy. The pillars are: ensuring of customer satisfaction, the interests of the members to the association, establishment of the optimal conditions for management, operation of a tender monitoring system, development of a continuously controllable and accountable qualification system, actual role taken by the tourism profession, realisation of effective communication.

- Creation of the gastronomic specialities of the district with the assistance of historians and gastronomical specialists, in the light of the historical traditions.

Szabolcsi pálinka tourism can be developed with the following researches:

- To assess the pálinka, quantitative and qualitative study, and based upon it, segmentation of the market.

- Study on the possibilities of the county for improving the tourism offer. Increasing the rural catering capacity, Finding the pálinka distilleries suitable for catering and preparing them.

- Revealing or forming parallel tourism attractions
- Specifying the basic requirements of program organising based upon the consumer expectations.

- Foundation of an association on the model of the wine trails, strengthening the positive features and eliminating the negative ones.

- Forming a strategy based upon the new developmental plan of county tourism.

## V. Acknowledgements

I received plenty of support from my instructors, family, colleagues and friends. I would hereby mention them by name and thank all of them for helping me, because I could have not written this dissertation without them.

First, I must mention the relevant, bright advice of my Advisor, Dr. József Tóth Professor, who is not only a recognised scholar but also a helpful friend. Dr. Árpád Hanusz and dr. Géza Szabó also actively contributed to my dissertation with their well-founded professional criticism and high standards. Dr. Magdolna Lácay Dean also contributed to the success of my work with her useful advice and comments in a similar manner.

Making the collection of Hungary's largest library available to me, my sister, Zsuzsa Kopcsay helped me in exploring the literature. Zoltán Szakál assisted me in making the diagrams. My strict lector and daily consultant was my daughter, Andrea Kopcsay. Mónika Molnár helped in the editing and reproduction, and Ágnes Szabados in the translation.

In the summer of 2007 I contacted nearly 20 specialists to prepare my dissertation, and these in-depth interviews formed the basis for my research. They all were willingly at my service, sincerely answered my questions and expressed their opinion in detail.

Finally, I owe my wife sincere gratitude and thanks, who inspired, helped, reproved me and did research, and like so many times during the thirty-years of our marriage, stood by me as a true companion, tiding me over all difficulties.

## VI. List of publications

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